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# TELEGRAM INFORMATION REPORT TELEGRAM

## CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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CLASSIFICATION — DISSEMINATION CONTROLS

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| COUNTRY | SOUTH VIETNAM | REPORT NO. | [redacted] |
| SUBJECT | MAJOR GENERAL TRAN VAN DON DETAILS THE PRESENT SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM; THE PLAN TO ESTABLISH MARTIAL LAW; AND, HIS VIEWS ON SOUTH VIETNAM'S FUTURE. | DATE DISTR. | 24 AUGUST 1963 |
| | | PRECEDENCE | PRIORITY |
| DATE OF INFO. | 23 AUGUST 1963 AND AS STATED | REFERENCES | IN 05978 |
| PLACE & DATE ACQ. | VIETNAM, SAIGON (23 AUGUST 1963) | | |
| APPRAISAL | SEE BELOW | FIELD REPORT NO. | |

THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION. SOURCE GRADINGS ARE DEFINITIVE. APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.

SOURCE [redacted]

APPR GENERAL DON [redacted] SEEMS TO BE UNAWARE OF THE ACTUAL DETAILS OF SOME OF THE EVENTS OCCURING IN SOUTH VIETNAM.

1. SUMMARY. GENERAL TRAN VAN DON, COMMANDER OF THE ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM, SAID ON 23 AUGUST 1963 THAT HE IS NOT THE MAN BEHIND THE PRESENT MARTIAL LAW ACTION IN SOUTH VIETNAM. HE SAID THAT HE IS A FIGUREHEAD AND RESPONSIBLE FOR ONLY THE FIRST PHASE; THERE ARE OTHER, WHOM HE DID NOT NAME, WHO WOULD TAKE OVER THE OTHER PHASES. DON FURTHER STATED THAT PRESIDENT DIEM IS IN CONTROL THROUGH NGO DINH NHU; THAT THE MARTIAL LAW PLAN WAS PRESENTED BY THE GENERALS TO NHU ON 20 AUGUST AND THEN DISCUSSED WITH DIEM, WHO MADE THE DECISION AFTER THE GENERALS RECOMMENDED IT. DON ALSO CLAIMED THAT THINGS COULD NOT REVERT BACK TO WHAT THEY WERE BEFORE; THAT SOME OF THE MINISTERS HAD TO BE CHANGED; AND, THAT IT WAS PRACTICALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO GET RID OF THE NHUS BECAUSE OF THE SPECIAL POSITIONS THEY HOLD AS DIEM'S THINKER AND PLATONIC WIFE.

CLASSIFICATION — DISSEMINATION CONTROLS

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| STATE/INR | DIA | ARMY/ACSI | NAVY | AIR | JCS | SECDEF | NSA | NIC | ~~XXXXXXXX~~ | OCI | ONE | ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ | EXO |
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| STATE/DIR | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

# TELEGRAM INFORMATION REPORT TELEGRAM

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By MMK NARA, Date 1/31/96

FORM 5-62 1Kb OBSOLETE PREVIOUS EDITIONS. (15-20)

2. DON WAS ASKED WHO WAS IN CONTROL AND REPLIED PRESIDENT DIEM IS IN CONTROL THROUGH CONSELOR NGO DINH NHU. ALL THE GENERALS CHECK WITH NHU PRIOR TO SEEING DIEM. EXPLAINED THIS BY SAYING DIEM USES NHU AS HIS "THINKER" AND ADVISOR BUT DOES NOT AT ALL TIMES FOLLOW NHU'S ADVICE. PRESIDENT IS JEALOUS OF HIS AUTHORITY AND PREROGATIVES. DON GAVE AN EXAMPLE. AT MIDNIGHT ON 22 AUG, GENERALS DON, TON THAT DINH AND TRAN THIEN KHIEM WENT TO SEE NHU ABOUT THE STUDENTS, RECOMMENDING THAT SCHOOLS ALL BE CLOSED IN SAIGON BY THE MARTIAL LAW, BECAUSE THEY HAD INFORMATION THAT ON 23, 24, AND 25 AUG THERE WOULD BE STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS IN SAIGON. NHU CONCURRED WITH GENERALS RECOMMENDATION, TOLD THEM HE HAD TO CHECK WITH THE PRESIDENT. NHU AND GENERALS WENT TO SEE DIEM RECOMMENDING CLOSING OF SCHOOLS. DIEM SAID "NO. THE YOUNG PEOPLE MUST HAVE MEANS OF EXPRESSING THEMSELVES." DON REPEATED THAT DIEM IS THE MAN WHO MAKES FINAL DECISONS.

3. DON WENT ON TO EXPLAIN RELATIONSHIPS IN THE PALACE. SAID IT MUST BE REMEMBERED THAT FOR YEARS PRESIDENT HAS BEEN AGITATOR AGAINST COLONIALIST REGIMES. DURING THIS TIME DIEM DID A LOT OF THINKING HIMSELF. WHEN HE TOOK OVER GOVT IN 1954 HE

FOUND IT WAS DIFFERENT AND HE WOULD HAVE TO HAVE PEOPLE AROUND HIM WHO THINK. HE TURNED TO HIS BROTHER NHU WHO IS A THINKER, AN INDIVIDUAL WHO HAS THEORIES, A PHILOSOPHY. AS TIME WENT ON, DIEM HAS ALLOWED NHU TO DO MOST OF THE THINKING. THIS DOES NOT MEAN PRESIDENT WILL TAKE ALL OF NHU'S ADVICE. DIEM LIKES NHU TO WRITE PRESIDENTIAL PROCLAMATIONS, SPEECHES. DIEM PREFERS HIMSELF TO MEET THE PEOPLE AND TALK TO PEOPLE. IN THIS WAY NHU HAS SPECIAL POWER AS A THINKER FOR THE PRESIDENT.

4. IN DESCRIBING RELATIONSHIP OF MADAME NHU IN THE PALACE, DON SAID THAT IN DIEM'S MIND MADAME NHU HAS STATUS OF BEING DIEM'S "WIFE". PRESIDENT HAS NEVER MARRIED AND NOT USED TO HAVING WOMEN AROUND HIM. FOR PAST NINE YEARS DIEM HAS MADAM NHU TO COMFORT HIM AFTER DAY'S WORK IS DONE. SHE IS CHARMING, TALKS TO HIM, RELIEVES HIS TENSION, ARGUES WITH HIM, NEEDLES HIM AND, LIKE A VIETNAMESE WIFE, SHE IS DOMINANT IN THE HOUSEHOLD. PRESIDENT AND MADAME NHU LIVE TWO APARTMENTS APART. THERE ARE NO SEXUAL RELATIONS BETWEEN DIEM AND MADAME NHU. IN DON'S OPINION, PRESIDENT HAS NEVER HAD SEXUAL RELATIONS.

HE LIKENED THE SITUATION TO THAT OF HITLER AND EVA BRAUN. DON ALSO SAID, THE PRESIDENT LIKES GOOD LOOKING MEN AROUND HIM. DON

CITED THE CASE OF HANDSOME YOUNG SERGEANT WHO PLANTED A PUBLIC GARDEN IN DALAT. PRESIDENT ASKED WHO HAD PLANTED THE GARDEN AND WHEN INFORMED, CALLED THE SERGEANT TO THE PALACE AND IMMEDIATELY PROMOTED HIM TO LT. COLONEL AND PUT HIM IN CHARGE OF MILITARY AGRICULTURE. DIEM HAS INTENSE PASSIONS. WHEN HE LIKES SOMEBODY, HE LIKES THEM ALL THE WAY; WHEN HE HATES SOMEONE, HE HATES COMPLETELY. THERE IS NO IN-BETWEEN. MADAME NHU USES HER PRIVILEGED POSITION WITH PRESIDENT TO MAKE HIM SAY YES WHEN HE WANTS TO SAY NO, BUT HE IS WON BY HER CHARM. DON SAID, "AS I KNOW, MADAME NHU CAN BE EXTREMELY CHARMING." DON SAID IT WOULD BE PRACTICALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO GET RID OF THE NHUS BECAUSE OF SPECIAL POSITIONS THEY HOLD; NGO DINH NHU BEING PRESIDENT'S THINKER AND MADAME NHU HIS PLATONIC WIFE.

5. THE DECISION FOR THE ACTION OF 20-21 AUGUST WAS REACHED BY TEN GENERALS DURING THE EVENING OF 18 AUG: TRAN VAN DON, TON THAT DINH, DO CAO TRI, TRAN THIEN KHIEM, NGUYEN KHANH, HUYNH VAN CAO, MAI HUU XUAN, NGUYEN NGOC LE, LE VAN KIM, AND DUONG VAN MINH. ACCORDING TO DON, THEY HAD NOT BEEN ENCOURAGED TO REACH THIS DECISION BY NHU. ONLY TIME NHU HAD TALKED ABOUT ANY PLANNING WAS AT MEETING 11 JULY WITH ALL GENERALS PRESENT. DON DID NOT SAY WHO BROUGHT GENERALS TOGETHER 18 AUG.

THIS PLANNING INCLUDED MARTIAL LAW AND EVENTUAL TAKING OF BONZES WHO CAME FROM OUTSIDE SAIGON AND RETURNING THEM TO THEIR OWN PROVINCES AND PAGODAS. PLAN WAS PRESENTED BY GENERALS TO NHU ON 20 AUG. NHU TOLD THEM TO DISCUSS PLANS WITH PRESIDENT. NHU WAS NOT PRESENT WHEN GENERALS PRESENTED THEIR PLAN TO DIEM. GENERALS PRESENT WERE: KHIEM, TRI, KHANH, DINH, HUYNH VAN CAO, KIM AND DON. DON HEADED THE GROUP THAT PRESENTED THE PLAN TO THE PRESIDENT.

5. GENERALS TOLD PRESIDEUT THAT MORALE OF TROOPS WAS DETERIORATING, AND IN FACT THEY FEARED THAT ONE MILITARY POST WAS NEAR STATE OF DESERTION. GENERALS SAID THAT WIVES OF SOLDIERS AND JUNIOR OFFICERS WERE GETTING UPSET. THEY EXPLAINED TO PRESIDENT THE SITUATION AS THE MILITARY SAW IT VIS-A-VIS THE BUDDHISTS. DON CLAIMS HE TOLD DIEM THAT 8 MAY AFFAIR IN HUE COULD HAVE BEEN SETTLED BUT THAT THE VC HAD PENETRATED BUDDHISTS IN XA LOI PAGODA. DON DESCRIBED TACTICS USED IN DEMONSTRATIONS ON 11 AUG WHEN BONZE THICH TAM CHAU WAS HARANGUING THE CROWD AT XA LOI. CHAU HELD CROWD SPELLBOUND WITH QUESTIONS LIKE "ARE WE GOING TO MARCH IN STREETS"? CROWD WOULD CALL BACK "YES". SUDDENLY CHAU WOULD SAY "NO, WE WILL

NOT MARCH IN THE STREETS. THE FACT THAT YOU HAVE SAID WE ARE GOING TO MARCH IN STREETS IS SAME AS MARCHING IN THE STREETS." DON FELT THAT THE BONZE WHO SPOKE ENGLISH, THICH DUC NGHIEP, WAS VERY DEANGEROUS AND THE GENERALS FEARED THAT IF THE BUDDHIST LEADERS ASSEMBLED A LARGE ENOUGH CROWD THEY COULD ORDER A MARCH TOWARD GIA LONG PALACE AND THE ARMY WOULD NOT STOP THEM.

7. DON SAID THE PRESIDENT MADE DECISION TO ESTABLISH MARTIAL LAW AFTER THE GENERALS HAD RECOMMENDED IT. DIEM MADE THE DECISION TO BRING IN TROOPS TO OCCUPY STRATEGIC POINTS OF SAIGON/CHOLON AND APPROVED THE RECOMMENDATION TO MOVE BONZES VISITING SAIGON BACK TO THEIR PROVINCES AND THEIR PAGODAS. PRESIDENT INSISTED HOWEVER THAT NONE OF THE BONZES BE HURT. DON SAID THIS TOUCHED HIM VERY MUCH THAT THE PRESIDENT SHOULD INSIST ON THEIR NOT HARMING THE BUDDHISTS. DIEM APPOINTED GENERAL DON AS TEMPORARY SUCCESSOR TO GENERAL LE VAN TY. DIEM MADE DON RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL TROOPS IN SVN, THE CONDUCT OF MARTIAL LAW, AND IMPLEMENTATION OF NECESSARY MEASURES. GENERAL TON THAT DINH WAS APPOINTED MILITARY GOVERNOR OF SAIGON/CHOLON. COLONEL LE QUANG TUNG'S TROOPS OF SPECIAL FORCES HIGH COMMAND REMAIN UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE PRESIDENCY.

DON POINTED OUT THAT DINH DID NOT COMMAND TUNG'S TROOPS EVEN THOUGH HE IS MILITARY GOVERNOR OF SAIGON/CHOLON. DINH AS MILITARY GOVERNOR COORDINATES WITH DON BUT DON DOES NOT COMMAND DINH. DINH DOES ASK GENERAL STAFF FOR GUIDANCE BUT HE DOES NOT EXECUTE ALL GENERAL STAFF ORDERS. HE RECEIVES HIS ORDERS AS MILITARY GOVERNOR FROM THE PRESIDENCY JUST AS COLONEL TUNG DOES. DON SAID COL TUNG IS DANGEROUS BECAUSE HE IS NOT SUBJECT TO MILITARY CONTROL AND EXECUTES ORDERS ONLY FROM PRESIDENCY. DON ALSO SAID THAT THE GENERALS HATE TUNG'S GUTS. TUNG IS RESPONSIVE TO BOTH DIEM AND NHU. TUNG COORDINATES WITH NHU, BUT WHEN DECISION IS MADE, IT COMES FROM THE PRESIDENT. GENERAL DON SAID THAT THE OTHER GENERALS SUPPORT HIM (DON) EXCEPT SOME OF THE YOUNGER GENERALS. THESE YOUNGER GENERALS ARE JEALOUS OF DON'S HAVING ASSUMED GENERAL TY'S COMMAND. DON DID NOT NAME ANY OF THESE YOUNGER GENERALS. DON WAS CRITICIZED BY THESE YOUNGER GENERALS FOR THE ACTION THAT WAS TAKEN AGAINST THE BUDDHISTS. MAJORITY OF VIETNAMESE GENERALS ARE BUDDHIST. FOR EXAMPLE, DON SAID, "WHEN I WANT TO TELL GENERAL TRAN TU OAI SOMETHING OAI TELLS ME HE IS A CIVILIAN; HE HAS CIVILIAN RESPONSIBILITY". WHEN ASKED SPECIFICALLY IF

GENERAL NGUYEN KHANH SUPPORTED DON, DON REPLIED THAT KHANH WAS 100 PERCENT WITH HIM. DON SAID ALSO THAT DUONG VAN MINH, TRAN VAN MINH, GENERALS TRI, KHIEM, KIM AND "EVEN XUAN" WERE WITH HIM. WHEN ASKED IF GENERAL VAN THANH CAO, THE DELEGATE WAS IN ON ANY OF THE PLANNING, DON SAID CAO WAS LEFT COMPLETELY OUT. HE IS CONSIDERED BY THE OTHER GENERALS TO BE A CIVILIAN.

8. GENERAL DON SAID HE WAS NOT AWARE THAT THE BUDDHISTS WERE GOING TO BE ATTACKED BY THE POLICE AND VIETNAMESE SPECIAL FORCES. DINH, AS MILITARY GOVERNOR, RECEIVED HIS ORDERS FROM THE PRESIDENCY AND WAS TOLD COLONEL TUNG'S TROOPS WOULD BE USED TO REINFORCE POLICE BECAUSE VNSF HAD "SPECIAL MEANS". DON INTIMATED BUT DID NOT STATE THAT THE ORDERS CAME FROM NHU. FIRST INDICATION GENERAL DON HAD THAT PAGODAS WERE ATTACKED WAS WHEN HE RECEIVED CALL ON HIS COMMAND RADIO. GENERALS KHIEM AND DON WERE AT JGS WHEN THEY HEARD THAT PAGODAS HAD BEEN ATTACKED. DON WENT IMMEDIATELY FROM HIS COMMAND POST TO XA LOI. POLICE COMMISSIONER TRAN VAN TU WAS IN COMMAND AT XA LOI PAGODA BACKED UP BY COLONEL TUNG'S SPECIAL FORCES IN THE PERIPHERY OF THE AREA. THE POLICE WERE THE FIRST TO ENTER THE PAGODA.

WHEN DON ARRIVED AT XA LOI, A POLICE LIEUTENANT WAS ALREADY IN CHARGE OF A DETAIL INSIDE XA LOI. THE XA LOI BONZES HAD ALREADY BEEN TAKEN AWAY WHEN DON ARRIVED. IN THE WHOLE OPERATION A TOTAL OF THIRTY PEOPLE WERE WOUNDED, FIVE SERIOUSLY. THIS FIGURE INCLUDES GVN AND BUDDHIST CASUALTIES. NO BONZES WERE KILLED AT XA LOI. AT 0430 HOURS ON MORNING OF 21 AUG THE MILITARY OPERATION HAD BEEN COMPLETED AS FAR AS THE OCCUPATION OF THE STRATEGIC POINTS BY THE MILITARY WERE CONCERNED. DON SAID THAT 1420 BONZES WERE UNDER DETENTION THROUGHOUT SVN.

9. GENERAL DON WAS VERY PROUD OF THE FACT THAT THE GENERALS HAD BEEN ABLE TO MAINTAIN SECRECY PRIOR TO INITIATION OF THIS OPERATION. HE WAS ALSO PROUD OF THE TECHNIQUE EMPLOYED BY THE TROOPS AND HE SAID "EVERYBODY ALWAYS TALKS OF COLONELS WHO WILL PULL COUPS D'ETAT. THEY ARE INCAPABLE. WE HAVE PROVEN THIS BY OUR PLANNING AND OUR TECHNIQUE". HE CITED AS AN EXAMPLE THE 11 NOVEMBER 1960 COUP D'ETAT WHICH WAS PLANNED BY COLONELS AND FAILED. DON DID NOT EXPRESS HIS PERSONAL REACTION TO THE ATTACK ON THE PAGODAS. DON DID SAY THAT HE WANTS TO CARRY OUT HIS ORIGINAL PLAN TO SCREEN ALL THE

BONZES AND RETURN THEM TO THEIR PROVINCES AND TO THEIR PAGODAS. DON ALSO SAID THAT THE U S IS HOLDING THICH TRI QUANG IN USOM. DON ADDED THAT TRI QUANG WAS ONE OF THE MAIN AGITATORS AND THE GVN WANTS TO TAKE HIM IN CUSTODY. (FIELD COMMENT: DON APPARENTLY BELIEVES TRI QUANG IS ONE OF THE TWO BONZES TAKING REFUGE IN USOM. A CAS OFFICER WHO KNOWS TRI QUANG WELL SAW BOTH OF THE BONZES IN USOM ON 24 AUGUST AND CONFIRMED THAT NEITHER IS TRI QUANG.)

10. GENERAL DON HAS HEARD PERSONALLY THAT THE MILITARY IS BEING BLAMED BY VIETNAMESE PUBLIC FOR THE ATTACK ON THE PAGODAS. HE SAID THAT THE U S GOVT IS AT FAULT FOR THIS MISCONCEPTION BECAUSE VOA ANNOUNCED THAT THE MILITARY TOOK ACTION AGAINST THE PAGODAS. DON QUERIED WHY VOA DID NOT ADMIT THAT COLONEL TUNG'S SPECIAL FORCES AND THE POLICE CARRIED OUT THE ACTION. DON BELIEVES THIS WOULD HELP THE MILITARY AT THIS POINT. DON STATED THAT THE USA SHOULD NOW MAKE ITS POSITION KNOWN. DON DOES NOT WANT DIEM REPLACED, FOR EXAMPLE, BY AN EXILE LIKE HOAN (POSSIBLY NGUYEN TON HOAN) WHO IS PRESENTLY IN THE U.S. HE ADMITTED THAT WITHIN THE MILITARY THERE IS NO ONE WHO COULD REPLACE DIEM. HE CITED, AS AN EXAMPLE, HIMSELF, SAYING, "I'M NOT SMART NOR AM I AMBITIOUS. I ONLY TOOK THE JOB TO KEEP THE GENERALS TOGETHER".

11. DON IMPLIED HE IS AWARE OF PLANNED FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS. HE SAID "THIS IS THE FIRST STEP, AND THE SECRET OF WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN IS NOT MINE TO GIVE". WHEN ASKED HOW LONG HE THOUGHT MARTIAL LAW WOULD LAST, DON SAID IT DEPENDED ON WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN. WHEN ASKED IF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS ON 31 AUG WOULD BE HELD HE SAID THE ELECTIONS WILL PROBABLY BE DELAYED, BUT THERE WILL BE A RELAXATION OF MARTIAL LAW ON 24 AUG AS FAR AS CURFEW IS CONCERNED.

12. DON DID NOT SAY ANYTHING ABOUT KEEPING DIEM IN POWER OR REPLACING HIM WITH SOMEONE INSIDE SVN BEYOND HIS STATEMENT THAT HE DID NOT WANT ONE OF THE VIETNAMESE EXILE POLITICIANS TO ACHIEVE POWER AND THAT NO MILITARY FIGURE COULD DO THE JOB. [redacted] RECEIVED THE IMPRESSION, AND IT WAS 3.4(b)(2)

AN I[illegible] CAS officer [illegible] DON AND HIS GROUP WISHED TO RETAIN DIE[illegible] [illegible]RESENT PHASE OF THEIR PLAN.

I [illegible] HAT HE REALIZES HE WILL PROBABLY BE "SA[illegible] [illegible]T OF THE MARTIAL LAW ACTION BUT THIS IS NOT TOO IMPORTANT BECAUSE THERE ARE OTHER MILITARY LEADERS WHO WILL TAKE HIS PLACE.

HE DID NOT NAME THEM. DON GAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT HE IS NOT THE MAN BEHIND THE WHOLE THING. HE IS THE FIGUREHEAD. HE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FIRST PHASE. THERE ARE OTHERS

IN THE GROUP WHO WILL TAKE OVER OTHER PHASES. NOTHING DON SAID IMPLIED WHO THE MAN OR MEN MIGHT BE WHO WOULD TAKE OVER OTHER PHASES. DON MENTIONED THE FACT THAT VOA IS PLAYING UP THE RESIGNATION OF AMBASSADOR CHUONG. HE REPEATED THAT VOA BROADCASTS ARE HURTING THE MILITARY. HE SAID IT DOES NO GOOD TO SAY THAT MILITARY ACTION HAS BEEN TAKEN AGAINST THE BUDDHISTS AND THAT THE U.S. GOVT DEPLORES THIS ACTION AND AT THE SAME TIME SAY THAT THE USA CONTINUES AID. HE DID NOT EXPAND ON THIS TO INDICATE WHAT ACTION THE USA SHOULD TAKE.

14. DON MADE NO MENTION OF VICE PRESIDENT THO OR OF ANY OTHER CABINET MEMBERS.

15. DON SAID THAT AFTER THIS FIRST PHASE, THINGS CANNOT REVERT BACK TO WHAT WAS BEFORE. WHEN ASKED IF HE REFERRED TO THE GOVERNMENT, DON SAID, "YES, I'M TALKING ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT. THE PRESIDENT HAS GOT TO CHANGE SOME OF HIS MINISTERS." DON DID NOT NAME ANY SPECIFIC MINISTERS. HE SAID EVENTS ARE CONTROLLING THE SITUATION. DON SAID IF HE HAD TO CHOOSE BETWEEN PRESIDENT DIEM AND NHU, HE WOULD CHOOSE THE PRESIDENT. HE GAVE NO INDICATION OF WHAT OTHER OFFICERS MIGHT BE THINKING ABOUT NHU. WHEN ASKED IF SOMETHING HAPPENS, AND THE PRESIDENT IS NO longer IN POWER, WOULD DON GO WITH

NHU, DON SAID, "IF I HAVE THE CHOICE BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND NHU, NHU IS GOING." HE DOESN'T WANT NHU.

16. SOURCE COMMENT. THE IMPRESSION WAS RECEIVED FROM DON THAT ALTHOUGH THE PRESIDENT IS STILL IN THE SADDLE WHAT IS GOING ON NOW IS BEING CONTROLLED BY NHU. THE IMPRESSION IS STRONG THAT GENERAL DON IS NOT COMPLETELY AWARE OF EVEYTHING THAT IS GOING ON AROUND HIM. FROM DON'S STATEMENTS IT APPEARS THAT THERE IS A JUNIOR ELEMENT AMONG THE GENERALS CAUSING HIM TROUBLE. DON INDICATED THAT HE WANTS ASSURANCES ONE WAY OR THE OTHER FROM THE U.S. GOVT. HE APPEARS NOT TO KNOW WHAT TO DO NEXT. HE IS COMPLETELY CONTROLLED BY EVENTS AND REACTS RATHER THAN PLANS NEXT MOVES. IT SEEMS DON HIMSELF FEELS HE DOES NOT HAVE THE POWER OF ENOUGH INFLUENCE OVER THE GENERALS TO OVERTHROW THE PRESIDENT. HOWEVER DON DID NOT GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT HE WANTS BY CHOICE TO OVERTHROW THE PRESIDENT. DON EVIDENTLY WANTS TO CONCILIATE THE BUDDHISTS AND SAID THAT THE MILITARY SHOULD RESTORE THE PAGODAS AND THE HOLY STATUES THAT WERE DESTROYED IN SOME OF THE PAGODAS. DON MADE NO STATEMENTS ON THE SECOND PHASE OF THE PLAN. DON DID NOT INDICATE HOW LONG THE FIRST PHASE WOULD LAST BUT DID INDICATE IT WOULD LAST BEYOND THE SCHEDULED NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS.

17. FIELD COMMENT. [redacted] THERE IS CONSIDERABLE SIGNIFICANCE IN DON'S STATEMENT THAT THIS IS ONLY THE FIRST PHASE AND THE SECRET OF FUTURE PHASES IS NOT HIS TO TELL. WE CANNOT DETERMINE WHETHER DON MEANS THAT FUTURE PHASES CONTAINING THE "SECRET" WILL BE CONTROLLED FROM WITHIN THE MILITARY OR, FOR EXAMPLE, BY NHU, OR BY OTHER CIVILIAN FIGURES. DON MADE NO COMMENT ON ANY CIVILIANS BY NAME. HE SAID THE ARMY'S PRIMARY AIM IS TO FIGHT THE VIET CONG. DON ALSO SAID THAT THERE WAS NO 10 AUGUST GENERAL'S MEETING WITH NGO DINH NHU.

18. FIELD DISSEM. STATE (AMBASSADOR LODGE), USMACV (GENERAL HARKINS), CINCPAC, PACAF, PACFLT, ARPAC.

END OF MESSAGE